

# Diction

The components of diction:

**Sound** -- the way a particular word is formed and exhaled through the mouth. As air is pushed out, the position of the tongue, lips, and teeth all affect the sharpness, liquidity, and forcefulness of the sound.

**Accuracy** -- precision in language is often referred to as vocabulary. When choosing words, the poet, or any writer for that matter, must make use of as specific or as loose a combination of words as possible to either avoid or encourage misunderstanding.

**Connotation** -- There is a certain amount of intimacy that takes place in the reading of any poem. This intimacy is chiefly seen in the connotative meaning a reader registers from encountering specific words in the poem. Connotation, while highly personal, develops for the reader a certain idea of the speaker of the poem as well as an idea about the subject of the poem.

from William Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*

*The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature.*

This "coloring of imagination" resulting from a careful "selection of language" is as close as we can get to the understanding of diction. In its simplest form, diction is what makes the poem the reader's every bit as much as it is the poet's.

